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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA ON TRACK FOR VWP REQUIREMENTS

REF: SECSTATE 111324

1. (U) Post demarched Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Passport Systems and Technology Director John Osbourne on June 15 regarding the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) biometric passport requirements (reftel). Osbourne identified DFAT as the responsible ministry and designated himself as the point of contact for VWP coordination. His details are below:

John Osbourne  
Director, Passport Systems & Technology Section  
Passports Branch  
Tel: 61-2-6261-1035  
Fax: 61-2-6261-1038  
Email: john.osbourne@dfat.gov.au

2. (U) Osbourne affirmed that Australia was on the path to full compliance, having issued machine-readable passports (MRP) since 1982 and digital photographs in passports since 1992. He also saw no obstacle to the initial October 26, 2005 deadline for digitized chips, which were in progress.

3. (SBU) Osbourne did express frustration about the recurrent extension of deadlines to accommodate problems other VWP countries had with compliance, especially since Australia had invested large sums of money to meet the initial deadlines. He remarked that, had our demarche occurred before the GOA budget was announced in May, there would not have been funding for the implementation of digitized chips by October 2005. Parliament would not have authorized the funds knowing that an extension for the chips had been made for October 2006.

STANTON